

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
2nd Session

Vote No. 220

July 23, 1996, 11:59 am
Page S-8499 Temp. Record

WELFARE REFORM RECONCILIATION/Food Stamp Work Requirement

SUBJECT: Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 . . . S. 1956. Helms motion to table the Helms amendment No. 4930.

ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 56-43

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 1956, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, will enact major welfare reforms. The Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program will be replaced with a new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant to the States. The TANF block grant will be capped through 2001. Time limits will be placed on individuals receiving TANF benefits. Overall, the growth in non-Medicaid welfare spending will be slowed to 4.3 percent annually. The bill originally included major Medicaid reforms, but most of those provisions were stricken when the bill was reported. Without those Medicaid reforms, welfare spending will still be reduced by \$61.4 billion over 6 years.

The Helms amendment would require mentally and physically fit individuals to work at least 20 hours per week or to be enrolled in a job training program for that length of time as a condition of receiving food stamps. The amendment would not apply to parents residing with their dependent children, to minors, to people age 50 or older, or to pregnant women. (The bill will impose similar requirements, but will not make them effective until an individual received food stamps while not working for 4 months or more in the preceding 12 months. Approximately 12 million able-bodied people in America receive food stamps.)

During debate, Senator Helms moved to table the Helms amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

Those favoring the motion to table contended:

The Helms amendment would result in millions of unemployed Americans being denied food stamps. Some of those Americans would be factory workers who had been laid off after 20 or more years of employment. As industries change, and factories close, many people through no fault of their own find themselves unemployed. The Helms amendment would require them to be working

(See other side)

YEAS (56)			NAYS (43)			NOT VOTING (1)	
Republicans (13 or 25%)	Democrats (43 or 91%)		Republicans (39 or 75%)	Democrats (4 or 9%)		Republicans (1)	Democrats (0)
Bennett	Akaka	Inouye	Abraham	Inhofe	Bryan	Kassebaum- ⁴	
Bond	Baucus	Johnston	Ashcroft	Kempthorne	Graham		
Chafee	Biden	Kennedy	Brown	Kyl	Reid		
Cochran	Bingaman	Kerrey	Burns	Lott	Wyden		
Cohen	Boxer	Kerry	Campbell	McCain			
DeWine	Bradley	Kohl	Coats	McConnell			
Domenici	Breaux	Lautenberg	Coverdell	Murkowski			
Gorton	Bumpers	Leahy	Craig	Nickles			
Hatfield	Byrd	Levin	D'Amato	Pressler			
Jeffords	Conrad	Lieberman	Faircloth	Roth			
Lugar	Daschle	Mikulski	Frahm	Santorum			
Mack	Dodd	Moseley-Braun	Frist	Shelby			
Snowe	Dorgan	Moynihan	Gramm	Simpson			
	Exon	Murray	Grams	Smith			
	Feingold	Nunn	Grassley	Specter			
	Feinstein	Pell	Gregg	Stevens		EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE: 1—Official Business 2—Necessarily Absent 3—Illness 4—Other	
	Ford	Pryor	Hatch	Thomas			
	Glenn	Robb	Helms	Thompson			
	Harkin	Rockefeller	Hutchison	Thurmond			
	Heflin	Sarbanes		Warner			
	Hollings	Simon				SYMBOLS: AY—Announced Yea AN—Announced Nay PY—Paired Yea PN—Paired Nay	
		Wellstone					

20 hours per week, on average, as soon as they sign up for food stamps. Our colleagues assume that if people could not work they could just get State workfare or State work training jobs. We do not make that assumption. Our expectation is that a lot of these people would simply lose their food stamps and would go hungry. We oppose that result, and thus oppose this amendment.

Those opposing the motion to table contended:

The Helms amendment would deny food stamps to able-bodied individuals between the ages of 18 and 50 who did not have dependents and who were not pregnant if they did not work an average of 20 hours per week in a month. For their work, they could be enrolled in a State or local workfare or work training program. We do not care what type of work they might be given. They might find a private-sector job working in a warehouse; they might be given a community-service job putting books back on the shelves in a public library. The principle is simple: if any would not work, neither should he eat. In the United States there are 12 million able-bodied people who receive food stamps, and no work is required of them. Perhaps if they went to work, they might find that they liked it. They might find that it is rewarding to be useful, productive members of society. Whether they liked it or not, though, they have no right to be a burden on the majority of Americans who are working hard at one or more full-time jobs and are being taxed to support food stamp recipients. If anything, the Helms amendment is too weak. For instance, recipients with children under the age of 18 would be exempt. Millions of hardworking families with children have both parents working several jobs just to scrape by, and millions more single-parent families are headed by people working 40, 60, or more hours per week. Asking a perfectly health adult with no dependents to enroll, at a minimum, in a part-time job training program in return for taxing such hardworking families to feed him is not asking a lot. We thus strongly urge our colleagues to vote against the motion to table the Helms amendment.